

sure that all of us in Congress have a seat at the Agriculture Committee. I believe that is a big part of why the Agriculture Committee stands out for its bipartisanship and its commonsense approach in protecting food security and promoting people in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, see, based on who he is and where he comes from, Chairman PETERSON understands the incredible contributions that rural Americans have on our way of life. We do have the best farmers and farm workers in the world. Rural Americans supply most of our food, our water, and our energy. They are the reason for our food security and our economic diversity. We don't have to pay that much for food. Therefore, we can spend on other things in our lives and create a diverse economy.

Mr. Speaker, rural Americans understand that every American's obligation is to give back to this country and community that has given us so much. Maybe that is why 30 percent of rural America makes up 30 percent of our Armed Forces. But what Chairman PETERSON warns is that, even with all that good work in rural America, they feel underappreciated and they feel overwhelmed.

Chairman PETERSON sees that firsthand with the widening divide between rural America and urban America, a divide that has led to the depletion of jobs, of small businesses, of people, and even communities, which ultimately leads to a growing sense of desperation.

Don't get me wrong, people in agriculture are used to dealing with the challenges. I call them the four Ms. They deal with Mother Nature. They deal with the markets. They deal with the mandates. They deal with the migration and the lack of labor. But they are always pivoting to get over those hurdles. It is that risk-taking attitude that allows them not just to survive, but to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, nowadays, there are other forces in play in rural America, with large corporate firms squeezing out the family-owned farms, with chain stores pricing out mom-and-pop stores, with the lack of rural broadband, and the lack of healthcare options and the shrinking number of rural hospitals.

It is no wonder why in many parts of rural America there is a sense of desperation leading to a ridiculously high rate of suicides and leaving a vacuum that can be filled with a vilification of certain races, certain places, and certain political parties.

Unfortunately, this has led not just to that type of vilification, but also to the lack of faith and how our Congress and government can help them.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to do what Chairman PETERSON has always said we should do. It is time for us to do more for those who aren't from rural districts to work on focusing and connecting with rural districts by showing up, by shutting up, by listening up, and for us to put up a strategy that is not just about doling out billions of dollars

to farmers, but actually partnering with them so they have sustainable business and a sustainable way of life.

Mr. Speaker, if we do that, we will uphold what Chairman PETERSON has always asked us to do, and that is to work for the people and agriculture, and we can do that and provide faith to people in rural America and all of America.

HONORING THE LIFE OF PASTOR DAVID BAKER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and honor the life of my friend, Pastor David Baker of Belton, Missouri.

On November 29, Pastor Baker went to be with the Lord—a loss for us, but a gain for Heaven.

This last August marked his 39th year as senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Belton, Missouri, and 37 years from his founding of Heartland Christian Schools. Through these two ministries, more than 6,000 people accepted Christ and over 2,000 people were baptized; truly remarkable.

Mr. Speaker, Pastor David Baker had a tremendous impact on countless lives and was a leader in the community. He was respected for his knowledge as a Bible scholar, his kind heart, his love for others, and his willingness to share what God's Word says about the issues of the day. He was not afraid to take a stand for what is right and good, which is refreshing in today's world.

Most of all, Pastor David Baker was a wonderful husband and ministry partner to his wife, Claire, and a loving father to his three children—Brian, Brett, and Brooke—and to his nine grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, Pastor Baker will be deeply missed, but I know his legacy will live on in the thousands of lives he touched and influenced for eternity. I am thankful for his friendship through the years and I am grateful for the positive impact he made on our community and this Nation.

HONORING THE LIFE OF RON DITZFELD

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Mr. Ron Ditzfeld, a beloved business leader, philanthropist, and a true pillar in the Sedalia community.

Ron Ditzfeld was born and raised in Sedalia, Missouri. His parents, Jon and Bernice, founded Ditzfeld Transfer, Incorporated, in 1960, with two straight trucks. In 1968, Ron Ditzfeld and his brother, Donnie, began working for the family business. In 1996, Ron took over as the President of Ditzfeld Transfer, Inc. Today, Ditzfeld Transfer, Inc., has more than 80 employees and provides trucking services, bus transportation, container services across the United States, trash pickup services, and provides warehouse and distribution services.

Ron also served two years in the U.S. Army at Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

Mr. Speaker, Ron was not only a beacon in the business community, he also was very active in the community serving on the board of several organizations, such as the State Fair Community College Foundation, CHS Cooperative Workshop, and Sedalia Airport.

His civic involvement includes the State Fair Foundation, the Economic Development Sedalia-Pettis County, Daum Museum of Contemporary Art at State Fair Community College, Sacred Heart Foundation, Child Safe of Central Missouri, Sedalia Bomber baseball, JROTC, and local/national disaster relief efforts.

Ron was dedicated to his community and he lent a hand whenever he could. Ron was even known to drive the Smith-Cotton High School JROTC and Team SCREAM robotics team to national competitions through Ditzfeld Transfer, Inc.'s charter services.

Ron will be dearly missed by his friends, family, and community. Please join me in honoring Ron Ditzfeld, whose legacy will continue to impact countless lives for many generations to come.

HONORING THE LIFE OF HOPE LECCI

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and remember the life of Hope Lecci, a dedicated reporter at the Sedalia Democrat, who passed away just days from writing the news articles about the passing of community leader, Ron Ditzfeld.

Hope began her career, not as a journalist, but as a teacher of English and history at Smithton School District, where she influenced countless students and future leaders, including our current State representative, Brad Pollitt.

Mr. Speaker, Hope was respected and revered by all who knew her. She was professional, kind, and loving to those around her, dedicated to her family and her faith. I enjoyed getting to know her and interacting with her as a journalist. She was always fair and dedicated to ensuring every quote was accurate and the topic was thoroughly covered. I am sorry she will no longer be covering news in the area, but I know she is rejoicing and receiving her heavenly reward.

Mr. Speaker, may her example inspire all of us to be our best in our professions and in our interactions with others.

HONORING MAYOR GEORGE CRETEKOS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CRIST) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRIST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the life's work of a very honorable civil servant who has given so much to Pinellas County and the City of Clearwater over his long, accomplished, and selfless career.

George Cretekos has devoted his life to public service, over 5 decades of unwavering commitment to his fellow